7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

Religious Behavior

Socialization of the child includes teaching him how to adjust to spirits of the house and of the surrounding hills and springs as well as to people in his social environment. He learns the obligations he owes to these spirits in the rituals of house inauguration and curing. Place spirits are given an ethnic identity. The ancestor figures who live in the cave are Indians from whom all the people originate. The Ladino spirits residing in the houses and springs are a mythological projection of a conquered people who have learned to coexist with their conquerors by paying tribute of candles, food, liquor, and entertainment. If the spirits are not won over, they will admit the evil spirits who bring sickness and death. Their presence is known only by the trouble they permit rather than by good occurences; the miracles they perform are an undoing of the harm they have permitted.

The belief in the potentially dangerous nature of these spirits when their envy or appetite is aroused is linked to an understanding that men and gods alike are jealous and vindictive. It generates behavior that is in conformity with that of the ancestors. A sense of security is reinforced by the protective symbols of incense, the cross of palm hung on the entrance posts of the yard and house, candles which "blind the eye of the devil," and garlic mixed with hot herbs which exude an odor that evil spirits dislike. When the uneasy contract between spiritual and human coresidents is upset, a curing ritual is performed to make everyone "of one heart." Behavior with respect to both spirits and people stems from a policy of appeasement through entertainment and liquor provided in household ceremonials.

Behavior differs in regard to the category of saints called "spirits in the heaven" and those called "spirits in the church." Spirits of the heavens have incorporated pre-Conquest deities with those introduced by the missions. They are a more powerful force influencing human moral behavior. Illicit sexual relations carried out in the milpa by day are believed to arouse the envy of "Our Father the Sun" who will cause the milpa to burn by refusing to give way to rain. Similarly "Our Grandmother the